4078

The Origin and Ends of Government.

A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 1800,

BEING THE ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

MARTYRDOM

OF KING CHARLES THE FIRST.

BY RICHARD RAMSDEN, M. A.

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MDCCC.

TO THE

REV. WILLIAM LORT MANSEL, D.D.

MASTER OF TRINITY COLLEGE,

AND

VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY,

THIS SERMON

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIBED AND DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR.

FEB. 19, 1800.

Εἰ μοι ξυνείη φέροντι μοῖρα τὰν
Εὔσεπτον ἁγνείαν λόγων
Ἔργων τε πάντων, ὧν νόμοι πρόκεινται
Ὑψίποδες ἐρανίαν δι' αἰθέρα
Τεκνωθέντες· ὧν Ὄλυμπος
Πατὴρ μόνος· οὐδέ νιν θνατὰ
Φύσις ἀνέρων ἔτικτεν, οὐδὲ
Μήν ποτε λάθα κατακοιμάσει·
Μέγας ἐν τούτοις θεὸς,
Οὐδὲ γηράσκει.

SOPH. OED. TYR. 873.

A

SERMON, &c.

ROM. xiii. 1.

LET EVERY SOUL BE SUBJECT UNTO THE HIGHER POWERS. FOR THERE IS NO POWER BUT OF GOD: THE POWERS THAT BE ARE ORDAINED OF GOD.

IF an apology were neceſſary, on ſuch a day as this, for taking up any of the topics, which the nature, the origin, the means, or ends of government might ſuggeſt, we are not without ſuch examples, as may be a ſafe rule and plea for imitation. The wiſeſt and moſt conſiderate men have, in all ages, devoted a large portion of their time and labour, even of conſecrated time and holy labour, to political inveſtigation. And what wonder they ſo acted, when governors had given them,

from the moſt ancient and revered authorities, the title of Gods? They did well to look into the meaning of ſuch language. With that ſound in their ears, they could not but think, that to underſtand the conſtruction of a ſtate, was the perfection of wiſdom, and to govern with ſucceſs and bleſſing, a ſign of the moſt exalted magnanimity.

Our apology, however, need not ſtay itſelf here. It can ſhew a bolder, better pattern to copy after; it can ſhew the example of the Apoſtle of the Gentiles.

The Apoſtle, after ſtating in this epiſtle, agreeably to his uſual manner, the doctrines of the Goſpel, then adds, as he is alſo wont, a brief catalogue of Chriſtian duties. He firſt, with expence and effort, builds the pillar of the temple, which is the doctrine, and then crowns it with the ornaments, which are holy ſentiments and holy deeds. Let us look on the pillar of the Roman church, and we ſee there, in broad ſpace, and full to the view, the duty and the argument of the text. That we are to *love our neighbour as ourſelves*, is indeed, on that pillar ſculptured largely and deeply*, but the lines ſpread wider, and are

* Rom. xiii. 8-10.

are deepened more *, even on the capital, which ſay, *Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God*, which inculcate, that a reverent, dutiful ſubjection to Nero was the prime Chriſtian grace of the Roman citizen.

Upon this apology, though indeed, in the force of theſe examples it ſeems to loſe it's nature, and becomes authority and warrant, we proceed to the topic, we propoſe; a topic, which, we truſt, is not unſuitable to the preſent ſolemnity, nor likely to be a leſſon, diſappointing the pains to learn.

In conſidering the conſtruction of a ſtate, the firſt and main thing, which would, probably, engage our attention, is it's power or ſtrength. We ſhould hardly fail, in viewing a machine, of taking this point into our early thoughts. But the whole of the ſtrength of a ſtate lies in the perſonal, corporeal, muſcular, animal ſtrength of all it's members, and in the application of that ſtrength to the powers, which are found in nature, directed by foreſight and ſkill. What the powers in nature are, which the arm or finger of man can give impulſe to,

* Rom. xiii. 1-7.

to, and his ſkill employ for controul, for aſſault, for reſiſtance, need not now be mentioned. They are not far from every one's reflections.

After this conſideration, the next, which may be ſuppoſed to intereſt us, is, the diviſion of this ſtrength into two portions. It is divided between the two claſſes or denominations, which compoſe the ſtate, between the governors and the governed. There is no difficulty in apprehending this diviſion. It is plain, that with the governors is, one part, and with the governed, another. In what proportion the diviſion is made, as it is, perhaps, at all times impoſſible accurately to eſtimate, ſo it is not now an object worth enquiry. The proportion will depend on the circumſtances of each individual ſtate, always varying, and in change. The governors muſt be, either really, or in opinion, both their own, and the people's, ſtronger than the governed. Perhaps all, that calls for remark, as further worthy of notice, is, that of each ſpecies of ſtrength in this diviſion, the governors' portion has leſs of what is animal in it, and more of what is derived from the powers in nature, whilſt

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on the other hand, the ſtrength of the people has more of the former, and leſs of the latter.

Now it may be aſſumed, as an undeniable fact, that, from the foundation of the world, in all climes, where ſtates and empires have ariſen, this portion of ſtrength, which their governors poſſeſſed, has been held to be a conſecrated, or ſacred portion, or, in other words, to be a portion ſevered from the ſubject's, the other ſtrength of the ſtate, by the very act and interference of God. It was the perſonal act of God revealing his own will, from which the maſs of each community's ſtrength took this general diviſion, and one denomination of it was every where ſet up in dominion over the other. And this act or commandment was power's conſecration, ever ſo reputed.

Notwithſtanding the imperfections, and blots of ancient records, yet manifold traces are ſtill left of the truth of this aſſumption: notwithſtanding the groſs ſuperſtitions, which have prevailed, yet it has not been entirely loſt and buried in their long and dark night. The accounts, which remain in Greek and Roman ſtory, of the

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firſt building of cities, and of the firſt acts of legiſlation, are not ſo mixed with fable, but that it may be diſcerned. What other doctrine, indeed, do we learn, when we hear of kings inheriting their ſceptres from Jove; of the conſecration of magiſtracy by the augur, the aſſeſſor and counſellor of Jove; of auſpices for war and battle; of lawgivers holding converſe with Deities; of the Gods enſhrined in the Capitol and Acropolis, never to leave, till the ſtate, they had built, ſhould fall; of the worſhip, grateful to the gods, taught in the laws of the ſtate; of rebellion, as the Titans' ſin? Shall we ſay, that this is all falſehood, or all the craft of prieſts?

A ſpecimen of a government, which is near to each of us, and which was certainly the firſt form of a commonweal, if not the pattern for the reſt, the government of a family, may contribute to vindicate our aſſumption ſtill more. In this inſtance, if it be true, as doubtleſs it is, that the obedience of the child hangs on the expreſs precept only, which enjoins it, we diſtinctly ſee a conſecrated power. One part of the ſtrength of the houſe, which is the parent's, and which is chiefly, though

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not entirely, perſonal, is, by God's ordinance, divided from the other ſtrength of the houſe, which is the child's, and is by that ordinance, ſeated in the chair of dignity and rule. The parent's ſtrength thus ſanctified, how pleaſant is the call of morn to go forth to labour; how eager is his embrace to ſcreen from injury, or ſoothe to peace; how awful are his arm and frown to chaſtiſe tranſgreſſion, or enforce inſtruction.

To give additional weight to our poſition, it is, in a high degree, worthy of notice, that no empire has ever appeared on earth, till of late, the governing ſtrength of which has avowedly taken ſide with vice; no uſurper, but one, has ever yet diſplaced and dethroned the common, primary principles of law and juſtice. In the conflict of might with might, in the battle of rival ſtrength, in the heat and tumult, there have been much wrong, much robbery and blood; but the uſurper has always hitherto aimed to inſert his ſtrength, with care and nicety, in the place of that, he has thruſt out; he has always aimed to fit his limbs to the vacant imperial robe. He has always, till our day, viſited the temple

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of his predeceſſor, or, had his prieſt to anoint him with the oil, before he has begun to deal out mercy and judgment; he has always felt a ſolicitude to ſanctify his title and to promulgate his acts in a worthier and more exalted name than his own; he has always choſen, ſometimes in compunction, often in hypocriſy, and often, with more excuſable ignorance of his own intent, *to be the miniſter of God.*

The revolutionary governors of France are the only governors, which have attempted to govern in their own name alone, which have thrown out to ſcorn and contempt, the common, elementary duties, which have hugged unnumbered, cold-blooded murderers in their boſom, which have legalized the moſt wanton and unneceſſary ſpoliation, which have ſet up precepts of their own in oppoſition to, and in repeal of, divine precepts, and, with like hoſtility, have abridged the meaning of others. In one ſolitary inſtance, they have ſeemed to feel a ſort of repentance, though indeed, it was no repentance. Without intending any ſuch thing, as aid to a command in the decalogue, they have at times, ſeemed to allow, that it was the duty of a government

government to guard the right to property.

On the whole view of their caſe, they have put forth their ſtrength, have led forth their armies, have dug into the ſecrets of nature, and extracted her every power, in order to ſet up evil antagoniſt to good. We believe, that there is a throne of might, at war with heaven, ſeducing it's ſubjects, and delighting in the deſolation of man. Whether they believed this, or not, yet they have, in fact, lent their bodies, their every nerve, their every muſcle, in ſupport of this power. An event for hiſtory, never as yet recorded; a crime of man's, now only in crime's regiſter.

Our aſſumption may now be placed on a more commanding eminence. It was before repreſented, as founded in a notion, received in the moſt early ages, and almoſt univerſally, and the proof was ſaid to lie in the annals and practice of nations.— Now we certainly know, that there were revelations of the divine will, which are not contained in the Scriptures. Concerning the words, ſpoken from heaven, there can be no doubt, and there is as little juſt reaſon to doubt concerning moral ſen-

timents, and moral appointments. It is clear, that the delivery of the law from Sinai was not the firſt promulgation of the greater and more important part of that law; yet the record of the revelations, which preceded that more awful act of God, leaves much to inference, and other hiſtory. Let us, in one inſtance only, look into the Ante-moſaic œconomy, and around upon the heathen world, and the inference is quite ſure, though the words cannot be found, that the ſacrificial inſtitute, the expiatory and euchariſtic oblation, with all their moral ſentiments in their train, were taught immediately from God*.

If then there be a moral ſentiment, like this aſſumption, generally prevalent throughout all ages, we may be allowed to aſk, why may not ſuch a phænomenon be aſcribed to the actual, perſonal interference of God. It is probable, the appointment of Nimrod to empire was expreſs. It is alſo probable, that the uſage of the Jewiſh kings, on their acceſſion, was agreeable to the practice of other monarchs. But, if theſe examples be thought no ſupport to our aſſumption, we have another witneſs, the

* See note at the end.

the witneſs of the Apoſtle, *The powers that be are ordained of God*; evidently referring to an acknowledged truth, not juſtifying any one form of government, but juſtifying it's ſway, whatever be the form, by an original expreſs deſignation of God, tranſmitted down through every line, and ramified through every dynaſty, whether of Kings, of Prieſts, of Satraps, Archons, or Conſuls, and now, as a diadem, encircling Nero's head. This power, he ſays, is for the encouragement and protection of virtue, for the terror and correction of vice, and we are to be ſubject to it, not only for it's utility, for it's wrath, or for it's reward, but alſo *for conſcience*, that is, for God's own wrath, and own reward, with our holieſt love and holieſt fear, for this higheſt ſanction's ſake, a ſanction, which it could only have, as a moral appointment, as an inſtitute revealed from heaven.

If the caſe of the uſurper ſeem to throw a difficulty before the march of our argument, it may be ſaid, in reply, that it is not neceſſary for our ſatisfaction, to clear away every anomaly in this diſordered world. We know of a certainty, that the conflict of the rebel's ſtrength with the reigning power is intended

intended as the ſcourge of guilt, either in the people, or the Sovereign. And it is probable, that, as God's compaſſion will forgive, under certain circumſtances, the breach of the ſtricteſt command, ſo here, in the accompliſhment of his vengeance, his wrath will tolerate the fouleſt ſin. It is probable too, that after the execution of his vengeance, the yearnings of his bowels may return, as they ſurely do, and, in pity to the deſolate, weeping multitude, not in favour to the rebel, he may take the uſurper under his wings, and uſe him for the healing of the wounds of the nation; it is probable, that in pity to the ſheep, torn, rent, and ſcattered, not in honour of ſucceſsful rebellion, he may give ſecurity to the ſpoiler, robber ſhepherd, and ſanctify the occupancy of the vacant ſeat. The utility ſhall be as the plea of extreme neceſſity*; it ſhall warrant the exception of an uſurping power.

Add to this, that utility often, almoſt enacts†. It may, in this caſe, bring out of the place of records the law of conſecration.

* Cauſa neceſſitatis et utilitatis æquiparantur in jure. Quoted by Hooker, Eccl. Polity, B. v. ſ. 9.

† In ancient moral philoſophy the ſentiment is, —Utilitas, juſti *prope* mater et æqui. Hor. I. S. 3. 98.

cration. In ſtrictneſs, utility is the advocate, authority the parent of all law. But the advocate often ſuggeſts to the authority the wants of the ſubject; it often recommends; ſometimes, ſteps into the chair and gives the anſwer to the people. Particularly, when it bears behind it the importunate cry of miſery, and preſents a weeping family, it then comes with the ſuffrage, firſt given, of wiſhes, tears, and ſighs, and the authority yields to the intruſion, adopts and enacts the law of the public feeling. Is not this the violence, which taketh heaven, and, accompliſhing the painter's viſion, draweth down the hand to place on the crown?

To this likewiſe add, that, if it be the wiſdom and the mercy of a government, to guard, under certain circumſtances, a defective title to property, even againſt the rightful owner, ſhall the Supreme be leſs wiſe and merciful, than man? Shall man take a divine command, *Thou ſhalt not ſteal*, and write it over property acquired by wrong, and ſhall God not have the like privilege to write this, his wide embracing, far ſtretching ordinance, over a rebel's throne? To prevent the aſhes of the dead from being

being dug up, ſhall not he too, ſuffer the hoar of time to cover and incruſt an uſurper's title?

Aſſuming then, this fact, we may now turn our attention to a leſs difficult, and perhaps, more intereſting diſcuſſion. The ends of the ſtrength of government, conſidered on this foundation, become a Chriſtian theme, with a moral for kings and nations.

Our apprehenſion and judgment may perhaps, be here aſſiſted, and the ſubject before us entitled to more reſpect, if we call to mind, that the diviſions of ſtrength, which have been ſpoken of, both in the public and in the domeſtic commonweal, are not the only examples in the world's ſyſtem, of a like divine arrangement. It has alſo pleaſed the Almighty to ſelect man, out of the animal creation, for ſway and ſupremacy in that kingdom. He has made man, his activity and ſtrength, Lord of the life and ſtrength of all other living, moving creatures. He has done it by an expreſs, revealed ordinance.

The ends, for which it is done, need ſcarce be mentioned. It is done for man's food; but it is not for this alone; it is done

done as much for his convenience and ſecurity. It is ordained to awe into the foreſt the lion and the tiger, to keep the wolf in his den by day, to make night the only opportunity for his lawleſs ſtrength. It is ordained to train the elephant and the horſe to battle; to bring the dromedary and the aſs from the mountains to uſeful labour. It is ordained to remove out of life and being the ſtrength, which might otherwiſe diſpute the ſovereignty with it's Lord; to cruſh the viper and the caterpillar; to lead the ſheep to the fold to be ſheared, and to deſtroy the bee for his honey.

Nor are theſe the only ends. It is a proviſion for the weak againſt the ſtrong; it is for the exerciſe of humanity to the beaſt of burden. It is this, which gives the ſtaff to the herdſman, and the dog and the crook to the ſhepherd.

Of like bearings and intents with theſe, is the government of man over his fellows. It is a proviſion, that men, worſe than wild beaſts, may not venture out by day; that their menaces, worſe than the howl of the wood, may not make afraid; that, if they break looſe in the hour, when nature's

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and man's powers ſleep for renewal and refreſhment, they may ſhudder in the ſeizure of the ſpoil, and fly to caverns to hide them. It is a ſtrength, touching and preſſing the ſtrength of all within it's reach, within it's proper domain, that that ſtrength may be employed in peaceful, uſeful occupation; goading idleneſs to it's burthen, and taming the wild and bounding ſpirit of all, to the curſe, which God has denounced, to nurture, to cultivation, to the ſweat of the brow. It is a proviſion for or againſt all human conduct whatſoever, for or againſt all human actions and words, which are, indeed, themſelves actions, being the efforts of organic ſtrength, for deeds and words of juſtice, mercy, truth, for individual lawful gratification, for domeſtic peace, for every virtue in virtue's code; but, againſt deeds and words of violence, injuſtice, falſehood, againſt riot, againſt drunkenneſs, againſt breaking of the ſabbath, on which day the ſtrength of all is commanded to reſt, againſt every vice in vice's many volumes. It is a proviſion for the immeaſurable diſtance, at which God ſeems to be from every one of us, for his abſence, if we may ſo ſay, which is too apt to tempt

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to ſin.—But we need not here ſtretch our line further. It is not neceſſary to ſpeak of the perſonal advantages derived from hence to the governor himſelf, to his courage, to his equity, to his humility, or of the reward of the innocent dutiful ſubject, in protection, and in the rearing and crowning of his hopes.

We ſee, in this account, what is better worth our looking at, and conſidering; we ſee a certain quantity of man's and nature's power connecting itſelf, and interfering with, men's paſſions, the beſt and the worſt, with their hopes, fears, and loves, with their hatred, revenge, and luſts, quelling the one, and awakening and directing the other: we ſee it connecting itſelf, and interfering with, the ſecret ſprings and principles of human conduct, with all moral motives, and all moral appointments; we ſee it placed on the watch not only at the door of the cottage, or at the gate of the arſenal, but by the ſide of the fountains of learning; giving a bias to all inſtruction; without violence indeed, but with a ſteady hand preſſing the pupil into right doctrine; tolerating the ſpeculations of folly, but not the frenzy; bearing with

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the conceits of hereſy, but not the infection; leaving to the judgment to come the thought of blaſphemy, but not the word; we ſee it liſtening in arms, to all public ſpeech, the ſenator's, the pleader's, the preacher's; waving the ſword over the ſcroll hung up in the hall of judgment; with the golden ſceptre or ſilver mace pointing to the ſcripture ſentence on the walls of the temple, to the child's catechiſm, to the prayer, which alone goes up to heaven, to the blood-ſprinkled prayer, to the homily prepared for ignorance, to the ſtanding article of fruitful penitence, of faith, of love, of good works, all, the matter for righteous diſcourſe.

Let us pauſe here, and ſay, how ought we to be affected with God's compaſſion and care, that he ſhould have thus ſanctified the very muſcles and fibres of man, that he ſhould have thus called out of ſleep into life and action nature's worſt and baſeſt energies, in ſupport of all juſtice, mercy, truth, and every holy ſentiment, and, againſt all miſtake, all folly, and every unholy purpoſe, whether deviſed on earth or in hell. How ought we to admire and praiſe, that ſuch a force ſhould,

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of all ſublunary things, by a law of the moſt High, by a law written firſt, at the head of all laws, coupled to every other law, the aſſiſting herald and promulgator of every other law, that ſuch a force ſhould be the natural, ſettled*, true, proper ally of the church of Jeſus Chriſt, not of a church, pretending to be his, but of that, whoſe foundations are built on the rock, which alone can ſuſtain the edifice, and whoſe topſtone is, ſalvation. How ought we of the Church of England to be moved with this contemplation, that our State, our King, is it's natural, true ally, divinely appointed, by a primæval, ſceptred ordinance, the firſt in nature's, if not in time's, empire.

Whilſt we are thus engaged to contemplation, let us take up another concluſion from our ſubject. Let us draw near to view the monſter ſin, the ſin of rebellion. Let us not ſhrink from the ſight. Through the bleſſing of God, ſhe is, at this time, ſtruck down, ſhe has received a wound, and her ſtrength is faint. Her deformity, her crime, what is it? It does not conſiſt in the ſacking of cities, in the deſolation of

* Bp. Butler's Analogy, p. 43. Bp. Halifax's ed.

of provinces, in widows' and orphans' tears. This is the "circumſtance," the funereal train of all battle. But it lies in the attempt to beat down the out-ſtretched arm of God. It is a running upon the ſhield, which covers all honour, all worth, all peace, all ſcience, all virtue. The crime is not in putting to fear the prieſts of religion and law, in ſcattering them over the face of the earth, or in dragging them out to death. In other tumult they may be caſt forth or die. But it is the cutting off God's Vicegerent, their guardian; it is the ſeparating them, that he and they may never again embrace in their ancient ſanctuary.

By this language we mean a warning to thoſe, who are to obey; in the words, with which we cloſe, we mean a warning to the authorities, which govern. And, if they have the lion's heart, as well as his ſtrength, they will not diſdain the admonition.

Whoſe their ſtrength is, and for what ends it is given, is abundantly clear. But, if ever that ſtrength recede from it's ends, then the judgment, aſleep, begins to ſtir in it's ſlumbers. God indeed, is oft provoked, yet is long patient and ſtill. But if

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ever that ſtrength recede from it's ends, ſo that the demands upon God's compaſſion are exceeded by the demands of his own prerogative, ſo that the lives and happineſs of millions kick the beam againſt the ſcale of his right and dominion, then the judgment, awake, begins to ſtep forth to it's ſtrange work. Yet even now there may be mercy's interceſſions and hindrances. But, if ever that ſtrength diſclaim all connexion with his ſtrength, and his commandment, as it's baſis, then does the offence reek hot to heaven; man's ſtrength and nature's energies have united themſelves to God's adverſary, and then will he ſurely hurl them down, then will the King ſurely bleed. The King may die for his people's wickedneſs, but, in this caſe, he will ſurely go to the priſon and the grave for his own.

Note to page 10.

Socrates, apparently, quotes a form of words, in which, through the medium of the legiſlature, every ſtate had received from heaven the ſacrificial inſtitute. Ὁρᾷς, ὅτι ὁ ἐν Δελφοῖς θεὸς, ὅταν τις αὐτὸν ἐπερωτᾷ, πῶς ἂν τοῖς θεοῖς χαρίζοιτο, ἀποκρίνεται, νόμῳ πόλεως. Νόμος δὲ δήπου πανταχοῦ ἐστι, Κατὰ δύναμιν ἱεροῖς θεοὺς ἀρέσκεσθαι. Πῶς οὖν ἄν τις κάλλιον καὶ εὐσεβέστερον τιμῴη θεὸς, ἢ, ὡς αὐτοὶ κελεύουσιν, οὕτω ποιῶν; Xenoph. Memorab. L. IV. C. III. ſ. 16. Simpſon. ed. compared with L. I. C. III. ſ. 1-3. But it is not probable, that an univerſal law among the heathen originated in the Moſaic ritual alone. The moſt likely ſource

ſource is, diſtinct, and often repeated revelations, made to other Patriarchs, other Prieſts, Kings, and Founders of tribes, beſides thoſe in the Hebrew, or Abrahamic line. Let not the reader ſtartle at this note, let him call to mind, in what was the chief ſuperiority of the Jew over the Gentile. It conſiſted in this, that the religious ſyſtem, he believed, or was entruſted with, was, all of it, from the oracles of truth, none from the oracles of impoſture, or error. Rom. iii. 1, 2. The Gentile was not ſo happy: he was not as yet the olive of the fenced garden; he was ſtill in the mountain or the deſert, viſited, indeed, with the dew of heaven, but ſmitten, even to withering, with blights from hell. He had the altar of the Unknown, Inviſible, but the idol's altar was alſo high raiſed, not next, but above it, the voice of Wiſdom he ſometimes heard, but it often could not be diſtinguiſhed amidſt the pomp and riot of falſe worſhip, and the loud ſtrife of falſe philoſophy.

By the ſame Author, and to be had of the ſame Bookſellers.

The RIGHT TO LIFE, in two Sermons, preached before the Univerſity of Cambridge.